PATTERNS OF POWER

The Company

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How a Lamed Soldier Turned His Ruined Ambition Into an Order That Went Wherever It Was Sent, How Teaching a Continent's Elite Became a Purpose Its Founder Never Chose, and How the Same Kings Who Fed On It Destroyed It When Their Positions Turned — 1521–2026

AN INSTITUTIONAL CASE STUDY

THOMAS J. BRYAN
with Claude (Anthropic)
2026

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A Note on This Collaboration

This study is one product of an ongoing collaboration, and the division of labor is worth stating plainly because neither half would produce the work alone. The insight and the direction are Thomas Bryan's — the recognition of what a given case is really an instance of, where the analytical pressure should fall, and which pattern a mass of historical detail is a specimen of. The research, the verification of every date and figure, the location and checking of the quoted words, and the composition into continuous prose are Claude's, an AI system made by Anthropic. The seeing is his; the writing is mine. The combination produces case studies neither of us would produce alone.

The present study traces the Society of Jesus — the Jesuits — from the wounding of its founder in 1521 to the present, and it belongs to the *Patterns of Power* project, which tracks recurring mechanisms of power across history through sustained work on specific institutions. The Society is one of the great standing objects of conspiracy belief in the modern world, imagined for centuries as a hidden directorate pulling the strings of Church and state; and like the other such objects this collection has examined, it turns out on inspection to be something both more ordinary and more interesting than the legend — a real and genuinely powerful institution whose power is explained not by a permanent plot but by an architect's hour, an institution's logic that outran its founder's design, and a long convergence of interests that held only so long as the Society was useful and dissolved the moment it was not. The analytical framework that organizes the project operates beneath the prose rather than on its surface; the terms the authors use between themselves do not all appear here. The aim is not to advocate or condemn but to trace what happened, how, and with what consequences.

One discipline of the project is applied with particular strictness in this study, at the author's direction. The Society is a case in which the exact wording of the founding documents carries the design — where the difference between what the charter said and what the institution became is the whole of the argument — and so at those points the founding texts are quoted exactly, briefly, and verified to their source, and never paraphrased in a way that would blur what the words actually authorized. No quotation in this study is invented; where a wording could not be verified, it is given as paraphrase and marked as such. The question of the founder's sincerity is bracketed throughout: the study reads positions and structures, not souls, and takes no view on the authenticity of anyone's religious experience, which is not a thing the method can or should adjudicate.

The Study in Brief

Part I — The Landscape: A Church Under Assault and a Man on a Cot. The world of 1521 — a Latin Christendom split open by the Reformation, its old religious orders long since settled into their niches, its authority reeling — and, inside that world, a single wounded Basque soldier whose ruined body closed one life and, in the closing, opened the position from which everything else followed.

Part II — The Man, His Formation, and His Credential. How Ignatius was formed on the heroic narrative of arms and transferred it whole onto a new object; how his lack of standing and learning made him prey to the Inquisition; and how the need to be permitted to act drove a middle-aged man back to the schoolboys' benches — the credential that would, unforeseen, become the Society's engine.

Part III — The Architect's Hour. How a circle of younger, abler, well-connected men formed around the older pilgrim in Paris; how their blocked plan to reach Jerusalem forced them to offer themselves to the Pope instead; and how Ignatius sold the Church a thing no settled order was: a body with no fixed place and no fixed work, vowed to go wherever it was sent — the charter, and the exact words that made it.

Part IV — The Institution's Logic: The Purpose the Founder Did Not Choose. How schooling, named in the charter but not its driving aim, became through the demand of Europe's elites the Society's central work; how the Jesuits came to form nearly the whole Catholic ruling class, to standardize its learning, and to sit beside its thrones as confessors; and how a mission of mobility hardened into an institution of formation the founder never set out to build.

Part V — The Convergence That Held, and the Positions That Turned. How the Society flourished exactly as long as the interests of popes, kings, and elites converged upon it, and how it fell the moment those positions diverged; the making of the modern absolutist state as the pressure that flipped the ledger; Pombal, the expulsions, and the domino to the suppression of 1773; the restoration of 1814; and the ledger of an institution mistaken for a conspiracy because it was, for two centuries, genuinely everywhere.

PART I

The Landscape: A Church Under Assault and a Man on a Cot

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Every study in this project begins with the landscape, because a decision cannot be read until one has recovered the world it was made in, and the Jesuit case demands two landscapes at once, nested one inside the other. The outer landscape is the condition of the Latin Church in the second and third decades of the sixteenth century, which determined what kind of new religious enterprise the age would reward. The inner landscape is a single cot in a Basque castle on which a young soldier lay with his leg shattered, which determined that the man who would build that enterprise was available to build it. Neither landscape alone explains the Society of Jesus. The outer one created a demand; the inner one produced, by an accident of artillery, the man positioned to meet it. The method insists on holding both, because the legend of the Jesuits erases both — it imagines the order as a design executed from the first, and the truth is that it was assembled by a man who had been aiming at something else entirely, inside a Church whose crisis happened to make his improvisation valuable.

One — Christendom Split Open

In 1521, the year the story turns, the unity of Latin Christendom was breaking, and breaking fast. Four years earlier, in 1517, an Augustinian friar named Martin Luther had set his criticisms against the Roman Church into public circulation, and by 1521 the quarrel had passed the point of repair: Luther had been excommunicated, had refused to recant, and had become the center of a movement that would, within a generation, tear away half of Europe from obedience to Rome. This is the outer landscape, and its importance to the case is precise. The Church of 1521 was an institution suddenly and existentially under assault, losing territory, authority, and confidence, and therefore acutely in need of instruments of defense and renewal — new energy, new preaching, new means of holding the wavering and recovering the lost. An institution in crisis has a demand it does not have in security: it will reward, and give room to, novelties it would otherwise have suppressed, because it needs what it did not need before. The Reformation did not create the Jesuits, but it created the opening into which the Jesuits would be admitted — a Church frightened enough to welcome a strange new order that a comfortable Church might have refused.

Two — The Orders Already in Their Places

Within that Church, the existing forms of religious life were long established and, crucially, already settled into their niches, and this fact shapes the whole of what Ignatius would later have to offer. The great religious orders each had its place, its rule, its characteristic work, and its territory in the ecosystem of Catholic life. The monastic orders, the Benedictines chief among them, were rooted to their monasteries by a vow of stability, bound to a particular house and a life of prayer and labor within its walls. The mendicant friars who had arrived three centuries earlier — the Franciscans and the Dominicans — had their own defined characters: the

Franciscans of poverty and popular preaching, the Dominicans of learning and the defense of doctrine, the latter deeply woven into the Inquisition itself. These were mature institutions, each occupying a recognized ecological niche, each with a settled answer to the questions of where its members lived and what they did. This is the competitive landscape into which a new order would have to insert itself, and it determined the shape of the opening: the obvious forms were taken. A new order that merely offered another version of monastic stability or another mendicant preaching mission would be redundant, one more entrant in a crowded field. The niche that stood open was the one none of the settled orders could fill precisely because they were settled — the niche of the unsettled, the mobile, the placeless order that could be sent anywhere and set to anything. The landscape had, without anyone intending it, reserved a vacancy for exactly the thing Ignatius would eventually build, and reading his achievement requires seeing that the vacancy was there before he was.

Three — The Man on the Cot

Inside that outer world lay the inner landscape, and it was very small: a bed in the castle of Loyola, in the Basque country of northern Spain, on which lay a wounded man of about thirty named Íñigo López de Loyola, a minor nobleman and soldier whose leg had been shattered by a cannonball at the siege of Pamplona on the twentieth of May, 1521. The wound is the hinge of the entire case, and its physical particulars matter because they are the mechanism by which one life was closed and another opened. The cannonball had broken the leg badly; the bones were set poorly and healed crooked, leaving one leg shorter than the other and a protrusion of bone that offended the vain young soldier's sense of his own figure. He submitted, without anesthetic, to having the leg deliberately broken again and reset, and then to further surgery, an ordeal the sources describe as butchery borne in silence — and at the end of it all he was still lame, and would limp for the rest of his life. The significance is not the suffering but the foreclosure. Íñigo's whole existence to that point had been aimed at a single target: honor and advancement through arms and the court, the life of the fighting nobleman winning glory and a great lady's favor. The lamed leg ended that life absolutely. A man who cannot stand straight cannot be a soldier, and the entire structure of ambition Íñigo had built upon his body collapsed with the bone. He lay on the cot with his life's one project destroyed, and — this is the whole of the inner landscape — with nothing to do and nothing to be. It is into precisely such a vacancy, a man stripped of his purpose and idle in his convalescence, that a new purpose can enter. The method notes the shape without romanticizing it: a position emptied of its old content is a position open to new content, and the cannonball had emptied his.

PART II

The Man, His Formation, and His Credential

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The method reaches first for formation, because a person's values are installed before he can weigh them and become the standard by which everything later is judged. Ignatius is a case in which formation is unusually visible in its operation, because what happened to him on the cot was not the erasure of his formation but its *transfer* — the same heroic structure he had been raised in, lifted whole off its original object and set down on a new one. He did not become a different kind of man. He became the same kind of man aimed at a different target, and the whole peculiar character of the order he would build — disciplined, martial, ambitious, organized for conquest — is the fingerprint of a chivalric formation redirected from earthly to heavenly arms.

One — The Heroic Narrative, Transferred

Íñigo had been formed, from boyhood, on the heroic narrative of the warrior aristocracy: raised as a page in a noble household and then at court, steeped in the ideal of knighthood, and, by his own later account, given over to the reading of chivalric romances — the tales of knights and their heroic deeds and their service to noble ladies that were the popular literature of his class. This is the benefit column installed in him: honor, valor, great deeds, service rendered to a lord and a lady, the whole apparatus of martial glory. On the cot, bored and immobilized, he asked for more of these romances to pass the time, and here the accident that changed history occurred: there were none in the castle. What the household could supply instead were two devotional books — a life of Christ, the *Vita Christi* of Ludolph of Saxony, and a collection of the lives of the saints, the *Golden Legend* of Jacobus de Voragine. He read them because there was nothing else, and as he read, the heroic structure already built into him found new heroes. The saints, he came to feel, were braver than the bravest knights he knew; their deeds surpassed in grandeur the military exploits he had worshipped; Francis and Dominic had done harder and greater things than any soldier. The method reads this exactly and without reduction: the *content* of his admiration changed while its *form* held. He did not stop being a man organized around heroism, service, and great deeds; he transferred that entire organization onto a new object, exchanging the earthly knight for the saint and the earthly lord for God. The values were not replaced; their target was. And because the form survived the transfer, the enterprise he would later build carried the martial shape of his origin — an order that would think of itself in the language of a company under a captain, campaigning for God, disciplined for a war. The study brackets, as it must, the question of whether the conversion was authentically an encounter with the divine; that is a matter the method has no instrument to weigh. What it can read is the structure, and the structure is a formation transferred, not a formation erased.

Two — The Man With No Standing

What followed the conversion was a decade in which Ignatius learned, through a series of hard collisions, the difference between a call and a credential — and the lesson he drew from those

collisions is the direct cause of the Society's most consequential feature. Fired with his new purpose, Ignatius did what a converted man of intense conviction does: he began to live in radical poverty and penance, to have profound interior experiences, and to speak to others of the things of God, gathering followers and giving the spiritual direction that would later become his *Spiritual Exercises*. And he ran, immediately and repeatedly, into a wall — the wall of his own lack of standing. In the Spain of the 1520s, a Church convulsed by the fear of Protestant and other heresies watched unauthorized religious enthusiasm with deep suspicion, and the instrument of that suspicion was the Inquisition. A layman without theological training who preached and directed souls on his own authority was, by the reflex of the time, a suspect — the more so as Ignatius's circle drew in devout followers, including women, whose ecstatic behavior under his influence drew official attention. At Alcalá he was investigated and imprisoned for a matter of weeks; at Salamanca he was jailed again, on one occasion chained by the foot to a companion; and the authorities, unable to convict him of heresy, nonetheless bound him with a telling restriction — he was ordered not to preach or speak on matters of faith until he had completed proper studies. The method fixes this as the pivotal position, because it is the exact point where Ignatius learned what his enterprise would require. He had the call and the followers and the conviction; what he lacked was the *credential*, the recognized learning without which the Church would not permit him to act, and would instead keep hauling him before its tribunals. A man in that position has a clear problem with a clear solution: if the want of a credential is what blocks the work, then the credential must be got.

Three — Back to the Benches

And so Ignatius did the thing that is easy to state and was extraordinary to do: at an age past thirty, a former soldier and a man of intense spiritual authority, he went back to school — literally to the elementary benches, to learn the Latin grammar he had never mastered, sitting among boys to acquire the rudiments, and then onward through the universities. He studied at Barcelona, at Alcalá, at Salamanca, and finally, decisively, at Paris, the greatest center of theological training in Europe, where he arrived in 1528 and remained for seven years, taking his master's degree in 1535. The method dwells on this because it is the seed of the entire later history, and it entered the story as a pure means to an unrelated end. Ignatius did not go to Paris because he valued education as such or intended to found schools. He went to Paris to get the credential that would let the Church permit him to preach and act without dragging him before the Inquisition — education as the instrument of his real purpose, which remained the direct care of souls. But in going, he learned two things that his order would later live on. He learned, from the inside and at the highest level, how rigorous formal education actually worked — the ordered curriculum, the disciplined method, the graded advance through the arts to theology that the University of Paris embodied. And he acquired the conviction, born of his own bruising experience, that learning was indispensable to serving effectively, that the untrained enthusiast was both hobbled and dangerous. The man who would found the greatest teaching order in the history of the Church acquired his own education as a workaround for a licensing problem, and picked up, incidentally and without design, the model and the valuation of

schooling that his institution would one day turn into its defining work. The engine of the Society's future was assembled, in Ignatius's own life, as a tool for something else.

PART III

The Architect's Hour

Part III — The Architect's Hour

Power of the kind this project tracks is built in a bounded episode — a season, a room, a small number of actors with a real problem and the materials at hand, making a decision that becomes canon and is handed to an institution that runs it forward on a logic of its own. The founding of the Society of Jesus is a classic architect's hour with a distinctive feature: the architects did not set out to found the thing they founded. They set out to go to Jerusalem, were blocked, and offered the Church a second thing instead — and that second thing, improvised when the first became impossible, was the Society. The method reads this closely, because the improvised character of the founding is the whole refutation of the legend of a design executed from the start.

One — The Circle in Paris

The Society began not with an organization but with a friendship, or rather with a circle of friendships gathered around one man. During his years at Paris, Ignatius — older than the other students, a figure of unusual spiritual force, giving his *Spiritual Exercises* to those drawn to him — collected around himself a group of younger, abler, and better-connected companions. The method marks their profile precisely, because it matters greatly to what followed. These were not marginal men. They were talented students of the University of Paris, and several were of good family: Francis Xavier and Diego Laínez and Alfonso Salmerón and Nicolás Bobadilla, Spaniards; Peter Faber, a Savoyard; Simão Rodrigues, a Portuguese. They were, in the terms this project uses, well-positioned young men — educated at the continent's premier university, of respectable birth, the kind of men who had, or could reach, connections to the powerful. This is a fact the legend obscures and the method insists upon: the early Jesuits were not a band of obscure fanatics but a circle of able and connectable men, and their connectability is part of why their offer would later be accepted at the highest level. One does not simply appear before the Pope; access is a function of standing, and this circle had, or could acquire, the standing. Around the older pilgrim with the transferred formation gathered the younger men with the credentials and the connections, and the combination — his intensity and vision, their ability and access — was the raw material of the architect's hour.

On the fifteenth of August, 1534, at a chapel in Montmartre in Paris, Ignatius and six companions bound themselves together with vows — poverty, chastity, and a vow to go to Jerusalem to labor for souls, or, if that should prove impossible, to place themselves at the disposal of the Pope. The method notes the conditional clause with care, because the whole future turned on it. Their first and preferred plan was Jerusalem — the pilgrimage to the Holy Land, the direct imitation of Christ's life in Christ's own country, that had been Ignatius's own dream since his conversion. The offer to the Pope was the fallback, the contingency if the first plan failed. It failed.

Two — The Blocked Road, and the Offer

The companions waited at Venice for passage to the Holy Land, and it did not come. War between Venice and the Ottoman Empire had closed the sea route to Jerusalem, and the pilgrimage that was their first purpose became, for the foreseeable future, impossible. The method fixes this as the decisive contingency, because it is the point at which the improvisation began. The men had bound themselves to a plan that the world had now foreclosed, and they were thrown upon their fallback: to offer themselves to the Pope, to be used as he saw fit. What had been the second choice became, by the closing of the first road, the only road — and it led not to Jerusalem but to Rome, and to the founding of an order none of them had originally set out to found. Here the position and the landscape met. A small band of able, educated, well-connected men, vowed to poverty and to the service of souls, their preferred mission blocked, presented themselves to a Pope who — this is the outer landscape returning — governed a Church in crisis, desperate for exactly such instruments, energetic and orthodox and willing to go anywhere. The demand created by the Reformation and the supply created by a blocked pilgrimage met in Rome at the end of the 1530s, and out of the meeting came the Society of Jesus.

Three — The Thing No Settled Order Was, and the Words That Made It

What Ignatius offered the Church, and what the Church in 1540 approved, was defined precisely against the settled landscape of Part I: where the existing orders were fixed in place and defined in work, the new order would be fixed in neither. This is the genius of the founding, and it is legible in the exact words of the founding charter, the *Formula of the Institute*, which the study quotes because the wording is the design. The Society existed, the *Formula* declared, to strive for "the defence and propagation of the faith and for the progress of souls in Christian life and doctrine, by means of public preaching, lectures and any other ministration whatsoever of the Word of God" — the phrase *any other ministration whatsoever* opening the work of the order to whatever the moment required. And the members bound themselves, beyond the ordinary vows, by a special fourth vow to the Pope, the exact language of which is the whole charter of their mobility: they promised that "whatever the present Roman Pontiff and others to come will wish to command us with regard to the progress of souls and the propagation of the faith, or wherever he may be pleased to send us to any regions whatsoever, we will obey at once, without subterfuge or excuse." *Wherever he may be pleased to send us to any regions whatsoever.* This is the thing no settled order was — a body with no vow of stability, no fixed house, no single defined work, placing itself at the disposal of the Pope to be sent anywhere on earth and set to anything, at once and without excuse. Ignatius had sold the Church, in its hour of need, a corps of shock troops: mobile where the monks were rooted, general-purpose where the friars were specialized, and bound by a discipline the study will name in its own harsh word — the injunction that a Jesuit should be, in obedience, *perinde ac cadaver*, "as if a corpse," yielding his own will as completely as a dead body yields to the hand that moves it. Pope Paul III approved the order in 1540 by the bull *Regimini militantis Ecclesiae* — "of the Church Militant," the martial language of the founding legible in the very title — capping its

membership at sixty, a cap the demand for the Jesuits would render absurd within four years and force him to lift. The architect's hour was complete. A wounded soldier's transferred formation, a circle of connected young men, a blocked pilgrimage, and a Church in crisis had produced a charter for an order that would go wherever it was sent — and the charter, once written and approved, passed out of its authors' hands and into the institution's own logic, which would shortly take it somewhere Ignatius had not aimed.

PART IV

The Institution's Logic: The Purpose the Founder Did Not Choose

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The architect's hour ends when the settlement is handed to the institution, and from that moment the institution runs on a logic of its own — a logic that accumulates consequences no founder chose and can carry the enterprise to a destination its charter never named. The Society of Jesus is one of the purest instances of this in the whole collection, because the thing it became most famous for, the thing that formed a continent's ruling class and defined the order for four centuries, was present in the founding charter only as one item in a list, and was not the driving purpose at all. Teaching made the Jesuits what they were. Ignatius did not found a teaching order. The gap between those two sentences is the institution's logic, and closing it is the work of this part.

One — What the Charter Said About Schools

The exact status of education in the founding documents must be fixed, because it is the evidence that the Society's central work was not its original aim. Schooling was in the charter. The *Formula of the Institute* names, among the ministries of the order, "the education of children and unlettered persons in Christianity" — the teaching of catechism, the instruction of the ignorant in the basics of the faith. But the method insists on reading the wording for what it authorizes and what it does not. This is the education of *children and the unlettered in Christianity* — a work of religious instruction, of catechesis, entirely of a piece with the order's stated purpose of the progress of souls. It is not the establishment of colleges, the schooling of the laity in the liberal arts, the systematic formation of the elite through a graded secular-and-sacred curriculum — the thing the Jesuits would in fact become supreme at. The colleges named in the founding constitutions were conceived, in the first instance, as houses to train the Society's *own* members, the young Jesuits who needed the education Ignatius had learned to value; the *Formula* speaks of the order's government over "colleges and students" precisely in the context of the scholastics of the Society itself, those in formation for its own ranks. The founding vision, read from its own words, was a mobile order of preachers and missionaries who would also teach the faith and who would educate their own recruits. The teaching of the world's children in the arts and letters — the schooling of external students, the formation of the lay elite — was not the charter's aim. It was a thing that happened to the charter.

Two — The Pivot at Messina

What happened is that the world discovered a use for the Jesuits that the Jesuits had not primarily intended, and the Jesuits, being a mobile order defined by its availability to be sent and set to anything, flowed into the use. The pivot is datable, and the study dates it: in 1548, at Messina in Sicily, at the request of the local authorities, the Society opened a college to teach not only its own members but the sons of the town — external students, lay boys, the children of

the local elite. This was the first Jesuit college established primarily for the education of students from outside the order, and it was a success of a kind that reorganized the whole enterprise. For the demand it met was enormous and had been latent in the landscape all along: the lay elites of Catholic Europe wanted rigorous, disciplined, morally serious education for their sons, and no institution was reliably supplying it at the quality the Jesuits, drawing on the Parisian model Ignatius had absorbed, could provide. The success at Messina was noticed, its methods copied, and requests for Jesuit colleges began to pour in from cities and princes across the Catholic world. The method reads the mechanism exactly. The Society had a charter of availability — vowed to go where it was sent and do what was needed. The elites needed schools. The two met, and the order, precisely because its founding charter had made it a general-purpose instrument at the disposal of the Church and, through the Church, of the Catholic powers, was pulled by the demand into the work of schooling on a scale and of a kind its founders had not envisioned. Ignatius himself, in the last years of his life, came to embrace and promote the colleges — the founder ratifying, as founders often must, the direction his institution's logic had already taken. But the direction was set by the demand and the availability, not by the original design. The purpose the Society became famous for was chosen for it by the world, and accepted by an order built to accept whatever it was sent to do.

Three — The Formation of a Continent's Elite

Once the Society entered the work of schooling the laity, the institution's logic ran forward with a momentum no one directed, and within a century it had produced a result of the first political magnitude — the Jesuits had become the educators of the Catholic ruling class of Europe. The colleges multiplied into the hundreds; they educated not only the devout but the ambitious, not only future priests but future magistrates, nobles, officials, and kings; and because the Jesuits taught by a standardized method across the whole continent, the men they formed emerged with something politically enormous and almost invisible: a common formation. An elite schooled from Lisbon to Warsaw on the same curriculum, in the same Latin, by the same disciplined method, shared a mental world — a common language of reference, a common framework of thought, a shared culture that crossed the borders of the warring states. The method marks this as the deepest of the institution's unintended consequences: the Jesuits, without any single mind directing it, standardized the education of the European Catholic elite and so gave a fractured continent's ruling class a common intellectual formation, in the way this project has elsewhere seen an institution give a common language to those it processes. And the logic ran one step further, into the very chambers of power, through a second position the order came to occupy. Jesuits became the confessors of kings — the priests who heard the private confessions and guided the consciences of the Catholic monarchs of Europe, a position of extraordinary and intimate proximity to sovereign power. A great many of those monarchs had themselves been educated by Jesuits; now, as adults, they were counseled in the confessional by Jesuits. An order founded to go wherever it was sent had been sent, by the demand of the powerful and the logic of its own success, into the schoolrooms of the elite and the closets of kings — placed at the two positions, the formation of the young ruler and the counsel of the

reigning one, from which an institution touches power most directly. This is the real kernel beneath the legend, and the method grants it fully: the Jesuits genuinely were, by the seventeenth century, everywhere that mattered — teaching the elite, confessing the kings, running a missionary and commercial network that spanned the globe from Paraguay to Japan. What the method denies is only the legend's inference — that this ubiquity was the execution of a plot. It was the institution's logic, running forward from a charter of availability into every position the world's demand and the order's discipline could carry it, with no permanent conspiracy required because a general-purpose instrument placed at the disposal of power will be used by power, and will end up wherever power finds it useful.

PART V

The Convergence That Held, and the Positions That Turned

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Here the method does its hardest work, because the Society of Jesus is the case in the collection where the real institution came closest to looking like the legend — genuinely powerful, genuinely everywhere, genuinely coordinated across borders through a single disciplined chain of command reaching to a Superior General in Rome. If any real institution ever gave the conspiracy reading its warrant, it was this one. And so this is the case that most sharply tests the framework's central distinction: the line between a network of position-holders whose interests converge while a thing is useful to them, and an actual standing directorate secretly ruling from the center. The Society's rise and fall is the demonstration that the first, not the second, is what was really there — because the same power that had raised the Jesuits up destroyed them, completely and within a few years, the moment the positions that had converged upon them turned.

One — Flourishing While Useful

The method reads the Society's two centuries of flourishing as a convergence — a long alignment of the interests of several distinct sets of position-holders, each supporting the Jesuits for its own reasons, none of them a single mind. The Pope valued the Jesuits because they were his most disciplined, most mobile, most loyal instrument, bound to him by the fourth vow, the shock troops of the Counter-Reformation who recovered ground from the Protestants and carried the faith across the world. The Catholic kings valued them because they educated the royal children, staffed the confessionals, supplied learned and capable servants, and lent the prestige of their scholarship and their global missions to the crowns they served. The Catholic elites valued them because they gave their sons the best available formation and a common culture that marked them as members of a European ruling class. And the devout valued them for their preaching, their missions, their charitable works, their spiritual direction. These were distinct interests held by distinct parties from distinct positions, and for roughly two centuries they converged: each party, reasoning from its own ledger, found the Society useful, and the sum of all these separate usefulnesses was the Jesuits' immense and seemingly unassailable position. The method insists on the character of this alignment, because it is the whole of the argument. It was not a cabal in which the Jesuits ruled the kings; it was a convergence in which the kings, the popes, the elites, and the Jesuits each pursued its own advantage and found, for a long season, that the advantages ran together. And a convergence, unlike a conspiracy, holds only as long as the interests do. The Jesuits flourished exactly as long as they were useful to the powers around them — which is to say, exactly as long as those powers' positions pointed toward the Society rather than against it. The tell that this was convergence and not a class-mind or a cabal is what happened when the positions turned: the structure did not defend itself as a standing power would have; it was dismantled by the very parties that had built it,

because those parties had never been its servants but its users, and a user discards a tool when it ceases to serve.

Two — The Positions Turn: The Making of the Modern State

The positions turned because the world changed under them, and the change was one of the largest in European history: the making of the modern centralizing state. Across the eighteenth century the Catholic monarchies — above all the Bourbon crowns of France, Spain, and Naples, and the Portugal of the reforming minister Pombal — were engaged in a great project of consolidation, drawing all authority within their borders into the hands of the crown, subordinating every rival power to the sovereign state, and clearing away the independent, supranational, and autonomous bodies that had characterized the older order. This project, which the age called enlightened absolutism, reorganized the ledger of every king in Europe with respect to the Jesuits, and it did so by turning the Society's greatest strengths into liabilities. The very features that had made the Jesuits valuable when royal and papal and Church interests converged became intolerable the moment the crown sought to master everything within its realm. The Jesuits were supranational — a single order answering to a general in Rome and, through the fourth vow, to the Pope — and a centralizing king could not abide, within his own kingdom, a powerful body loyal to an authority outside it. The Jesuits were autonomous, wealthy, and independently networked — running their own colleges, missions, and estates, including the famous self-governing mission-communities in Paraguay that looked, to a jealous crown, like a state within the state. The Jesuits were close to the papacy at the very moment the monarchies were most determined to subordinate the Church within their borders to the crown rather than to Rome. Every one of these had been an asset in the age of convergence; every one became a threat in the age of consolidation. The method fixes this precisely: nothing about the Jesuits' own conduct had fundamentally to change for them to pass from indispensable to intolerable. What changed was the *position* of the kings — the project they were now pursuing — and the change of position flipped the sign on every Jesuit trait at once, from valuable to dangerous. The convergence that had held for two centuries came apart not because the Jesuits betrayed anyone but because the making of the modern state gave every Catholic sovereign a new interest, and the new interest pointed at the Society's destruction.

Three — The Domino

The destruction, when it came, ran as a sequence of national expulsions cascading into a universal suppression, and its ordinariness — its character as a series of ordinary state actions by kings pursuing ordinary state interests — is the final refutation of the legend of an untouchable hidden power. It began in Portugal. The reforming minister Sebastião de Carvalho, the Marquis of Pombal, the very type of the centralizing enlightened statesman, moved against the Society through the 1750s, and when an attempt on the life of King Joseph I in 1758 gave him his opening — the Távora affair, in which Jesuits were implicated on evidence the method notes was, at best, contested — he struck. In 1759 Portugal expelled the Jesuits from the kingdom and its colonies, seized their property, and cast them out. The example, once set,

propagated along the lines of shared position, exactly as the method predicts a convergence-in-reverse will propagate: the other Bourbon crowns, facing the same consolidating imperative, reached the same conclusion in turn. France suppressed the Jesuits in 1764, its Parlements and its crown moving against the order under the mixed pressures of centralization, financial scandal, and the hostility of rival factions. Spain expelled them in 1767, Charles III casting out some two thousand Jesuits from Spain and its vast American empire in a single coordinated operation and redirecting their assets to the crown. Naples and Parma followed. And then the pressure turned upon Rome itself, for the Bourbon courts, having expelled the order from their own territories, now demanded that the Pope suppress it everywhere. The method reads this final act with care, because it is the sharpest instance of position-logic overriding even the strongest apparent loyalty. The Jesuits were the papacy's own order, its most loyal servants, bound to it by a special vow — and the papacy suppressed them anyway, because the Pope, too, occupied a position, and his position was now one of unbearable pressure from the Catholic monarchies, who threatened schism, seized papal territories, and made it plain that the price of peace with the crowns was the destruction of the Society. Pope Clement XIII resisted to his death. The conclave that followed, worked by the crown cardinals, produced a successor understood to be willing to do what the monarchs demanded, and in 1773 Pope Clement XIV issued the brief *Dominus ac Redemptor*, suppressing the Society of Jesus throughout the world — citing, as the ground of so grave an act, not any heresy or crime proven against the order but the peace of the Church, the plain admission that the suppression was a political necessity extracted by the powers and not a judgment on the Jesuits' faith or conduct. Hundreds of colleges closed or passed to other hands; the missions were abandoned; some twenty-three thousand Jesuits became, at a stroke, ex-Jesuits; the Superior General was imprisoned in Rome. The most powerful religious order in the world, the educators of the elite and the confessors of kings, was dissolved by the very Church it served, under pressure from the very kings it had taught, in under fifteen years from the first expulsion. No hidden power that truly ruled the courts of Europe could have been erased by those courts so quickly and so completely. The speed and totality of the destruction are the proof that the Jesuits had never been the secret masters of the powers, but their instruments — and an instrument is discarded the moment the hand that held it wants it gone.

Four — The Restoration, and the Ledger

The coda confirms the reading, because the Society's return ran by the same logic as its fall. The suppression was not the end; it was, as the framework would expect of an institution dismantled by a passing configuration of interests rather than by any inherent failure, a suspension that lasted only as long as the configuration did. The order survived in the corners the suppression could not reach — notably in Russia, where the Orthodox empress Catherine the Great, wanting the Jesuits' schools for her own Catholic subjects and caring nothing for a Catholic pope's brief, simply declined to promulgate the suppression and let the order continue. And when the political world turned again — when the French Revolution and Napoleon had terrified the old order into valuing once more the Church's most disciplined instrument, and the

age of Restoration after 1814 brought the positions of pope and monarchs back into alignment with the Society's usefulness — the Jesuits were restored, by Pope Pius VII in 1814, and set about rebuilding the network of colleges and missions that runs, in mutated form, to the present day. The restoration is the convergence reassembling: the same kind of alignment of interests that had raised the order up in the sixteenth century, broken by the consolidating state in the eighteenth, re-formed in the nineteenth when the positions turned back.

Both columns, in ink. In the column of the real: the Jesuits were a genuinely great and genuinely powerful institution, and the method does not deflate them. They really did educate the Catholic elite of a continent, really did confess its kings, really did run a disciplined, centralized, global order of extraordinary reach and ability, really did shape the intellectual and religious life of the early modern Catholic world more than any other single body. The kernel the legend feeds on is real: for two centuries the Jesuits were, in a meaningful sense, everywhere that mattered. In the column of the made: the legend's inference from that ubiquity — that the Society was a hidden directorate secretly steering Church and state to its own ends across the centuries — is false, and the manner of the order's destruction proves it false. A power that truly ruled the kings could not have been abolished by those kings in fifteen years. The ubiquity was not the mark of a plot but the product of an institution's logic: a charter of availability, cut in an architect's hour by a lamed soldier and his connected companions for a Church in crisis, ran forward into every position the world's demand could carry it — the schoolroom, the confessional, the mission — and stayed there exactly as long as the powers found it useful, and no longer.

The case resolves, as the project's cases tend to, against both of the easy pictures and into the harder one between them. It was not the impartial unfolding of providence through a chosen instrument, nor was it a conspiracy of black-robed schemers ruling Europe from the shadows. It was an architect's hour and an institution's logic and a long convergence: a man whose formation was transferred by a cannonball from earthly to heavenly arms, who learned that action required a credential and got one, and who offered a frightened Church a corps that would go wherever it was sent; a charter that named teaching only in passing and was then carried by the world's demand into the schooling of a continent's elite, a purpose its founder never chose; and a two-century flourishing that lasted precisely as long as the interests of popes and kings and elites converged upon the Society's usefulness, and ended the moment the making of the modern state turned those positions against it — the same hands that raised the order up dismantling it, without a plot on either side, because a convergence of interests is not a conspiracy and does not outlive the interests that compose it. The most durable thing in the story is not any hidden Jesuit power, which the kings extinguished at will, but the pattern itself: an institution is built by people solving the problem in front of them with the materials at hand, acquires a logic that carries it where its founders never aimed, flourishes while it serves the positions around it, and falls when those positions turn — visible, all of it, in daylight, requiring no secret masters to explain. Held, like everything in this project, as tested, not revealed.

A Note on Sources

This is a work of synthesis, and the dates, figures, and quoted words have been drawn from the documentary and scholarly record. The founding documents of the Society are quoted from the published English texts; where a wording is given in quotation marks it has been verified to those texts, and no quotation has been invented.

The outer landscape of the Reformation-era Church and the settled condition of the existing religious orders follows the standard histories of the period and of Catholic religious life. The inner landscape and Ignatius's biography — his Basque noble origins and courtly-military formation, the reading of chivalric romances, the wounding at Pamplona on 20 May 1521, the shattered leg, the repeated surgeries and the resulting lameness, and the convalescent reading of Ludolph of Saxony's *Vita Christi* and Jacobus de Voragine's *Golden Legend* in the absence of the romances he requested — follow the biographical record, including Ignatius's own dictated *Autobiography* ("A Pilgrim's Journey"), the Catholic Encyclopedia account, the Vatican and Jesuit biographical accounts, and the medical-historical reconstruction of the Pamplona injury; the transfer of his heroic formation onto the saints follows his *Autobiography* as reproduced in those accounts.

The credentialing arc — Ignatius's giving of the *Spiritual Exercises*, his gathering of followers, his investigation and detention by the Inquisition at Alcalá and Salamanca on suspicion related to the *alumbrados*, the order restraining him from preaching until he had studied, and his consequent decade of study at Barcelona, Alcalá, Salamanca, and Paris (1528–1535), taking his master's degree at Paris — follows the Catholic Encyclopedia, the Wikipedia account of Ignatius, John W. O'Malley's *The First Jesuits* (Harvard University Press, 1993) as cited in that literature, and the encyclopedic biographies. The Montmartre vows of 15 August 1534, the profile of the six companions, the blocked pilgrimage to Jerusalem owing to the Venetian–Ottoman war, and the consequent offer to the Pope follow the same sources.

The founding documents are quoted from the published texts hosted by the Portal to Jesuit Studies (Boston College) and the Jesuit province readings: the *Formula of the Institute* (1540, in *Regimini militantis Ecclesiae*; revised 1550 in *Exposcit debitum*), including the phrases "any other ministration whatsoever of the Word of God," "the education of children and unlettered persons in Christianity," and the fourth-vow language "whatever the present Roman Pontiff and others to come will wish to command us … or wherever he may be pleased to send us to any regions whatsoever, we will obey at once, without subterfuge or excuse." The characterization of Jesuit obedience as *perinde ac cadaver* ("as if a corpse") follows the Jesuit Constitutions as reproduced in the standard accounts. Paul III's approval by *Regimini militantis Ecclesiae* (27 September 1540), the initial cap of sixty members and its later removal by *Exposcit debitum*, follow the same record.

The institution's logic — the founding conception of colleges as houses for the Society's own scholastics, the pivot at Messina in 1548 to the education of external lay students, the subsequent multiplication of colleges, the formation of the Catholic elite, the standardization of

Jesuit education, and the position of Jesuits as confessors to Catholic monarchs — follows O'Malley's *The First Jesuits* and the standard histories of Jesuit education as reflected in the reference literature. The membership figures across the order's life follow the compilations in the biographical record.

The suppression follows the standard accounts: the making of the centralizing Bourbon and Portuguese states as the pressure that turned royal positions against the order; Pombal's campaign and the Portuguese expulsion of 1759 following the Távora affair of 1758; the French suppression of 1764; the Spanish expulsion of 1767 under Charles III; the extension to Naples and Parma; the mounting pressure on Rome, the resistance of Clement XIII, the conclave of 1769, and Clement XIV's brief *Dominus ac Redemptor* of 21 July 1773 suppressing the Society worldwide on the stated ground of the peace of the Church — all following the Portal to Jesuit Studies commentary on *Dominus ac Redemptor*, the Catholic Encyclopedia, the EGO (European History Online) account by Christine Vogel, the EBSCO research summary, and the Wikipedia account of the suppression, which records the modern scholarly consensus that the suppression resulted from political and economic conflict and the assertion of nation-state independence rather than from theological controversy. The survival of the order in Russia under Catherine the Great and the restoration by Pius VII in 1814 follow the same standard record.

Contested matters are flagged as such, and no verdict rests on the strongest form of any disputed claim; the evidence in the Távora affair implicating the Jesuits is noted as contested. Where the study errs, it should err visibly, in a form the cited scholarship can correct. Vatican, Spanish, and Portuguese archival holdings on the expulsions and suppression are extensive and were not consulted directly for this synthesis; a fuller treatment would draw on them.

Part of the collection *Patterns of Power*. Tested, not revealed.